

THE *Theology vol 126.*
Mischief and Danger

OF REPEALING the

CORPORATION

AND

TEST ACTS.

Plainly Demonstrating,

That the DISSENTERS would desire, and endeavour, the Subversion of the PRESENT ESTABLISHMENT of the CHURCH of ENGLAND, if they had sufficient Power to effect it:

AND

That the Repealing the CORPORATION and TEST ACTS will undeniably invest them with such Power.

By the AUTHOR of

A VINDICATION of the TEST-ACT, &c.

L O N D O N :

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*The MISCHIEF and DANGER of
Repealing the CORPORATION
and TEST ACTS, &c.*



HAVING, in two former discourses,
— the one entitled, *A Vindication
of the Test Act, &c.* the other, *A
brief Enquiry, what right every go-
vernment has to defend itself, &c.* —
demonstrably prov'd, that the plea of
dissenters, for their right to civil offices, as it is a
natural right, is most *absurd* — that their *affection*
to the civil part of the constitution, or, to speak
more properly, their abhorrence of a *Popish Preten-
der*, can be no argument for their right to be ad-
mitted into civil offices; since it cannot be denied,
that they are open and avowed enemies to the
religious part of the constitution; and that, if
either part of the constitution be weaken'd or de-
stroy'd, it necessarily tends to weaken and subvert
the other part.

Having shewn, that *every* government, as well
Popish, or Mahometan, as Protestant, has an *equal*
right

right to establish a national religion, and to exclude any part of her subjects, who do not conform to the establish'd religion, from all civil offices; and that this right is not founded upon any supposition, that the establish'd religion is the only *true* religion; or upon any right, that the magistrate or civil government has to *compel* any man to conform to the establish'd religion; but as it is absolutely necessary to the *peace* and *welfare* of the society.

Having prov'd, that those consequences, which are pretended to be deduc'd from the exclusion of dissenters from civil offices, are *false* and *absurd*; viz. that the exclusion of dissenters from civil offices is inflicting penalties on them, purely on account of their religious differences—that it justifies the exercise of the greatest hardships and severities against them—that it justifies the several cruelties and barbarities of *Papists* against *Protestants*, in all *Popish* countries—and, that it hurts the *Protestant* cause, and hinders and oppresses the *reformation*, in all *Popish* countries.

Having, I think, evidently prov'd these things, it remains to be considered—what will, in all probability, be the *consequences* of admitting dissenters into civil offices. Whether it will be attended with such tranquillity, and harmony, and concord, as their advocates would persuade us: or, whether it will not necessarily produce such animosities, contests, and confusions, as will be very dangerous to the welfare of the nation, if not, in the end, destructive of the constitution.

This is the *principal* point, that deserves well to be consider'd, and what ought *chiefly* to determine the legislature in the repeal of these incapacitating acts; and to satisfy every true friend to the present establishment, whether it be reasonable and prudent, that this thing ought to be done.

In

In order to shew the dangerous *consequences* of repealing the *Corporation* and *Test Acts*, with respect to the peace and welfare of this nation, it will be necessary to prove these two things.

I. That dissenters, if *sufficient* power and trust were put into their hands, would desire, and endeavour, the subversion of the present establishment of the Church of *England*.

II. That the *repeal* of the *Corporation* and *Test Acts* will actually invest them with *such* a power.

That dissenters, if *sufficient* power and trust were put into their hands, would desire, and endeavour, the subversion of the present establishment of the Church of *England*, is plainly demonstrable from these three considerations.

1. From the nature of mankind in general.
2. From the doctrine and behaviour of dissenters in former reigns.
3. From the temper and principles of the dissenters of the present age.

In the first place, it is most absurd to argue or think, that dissenters do not desire the subversion of the establishment of the Church of *England*, if we consider the nature of mankind in general.

An ingenious writer has well exprels'd this matter.

“ Men are naturally desirous, that their own
 “ way of thinking should prevail. They are
 “ wont to approve and favour persons of the
 “ same opinion with themselves, in preference to
 “ others; especially when they think, not only
 “ that their own opinions and practices are *right*,
 “ but that those of their opponents are *sinful*; and
 “ that therefore it will be for the honour of God
 “ to have the latter be suppressed, and their own
 “ be

“ be promoted. Inducements of this kind are generally sufficient to put them upon endeavouring to spread their own notions; but, most of all, when any *secular advantage* may be gain’d by so doing; for then human passions, mixed and covered with religious pretences, and thereby appearing to be justified, make them frequently act with extraordinary vehemence.”

These are so much the common workings of human nature in general, that a man must be very ignorant indeed of the passions and desires of mankind, and of the conduct of dissenters in all nations, but more particularly in this, that will not see and acknowledge this zeal in *all* men to propagate their own opinions in religion, especially when it advances their *secular* interests.

The undeniable truth of these things has made the legislature, or civil magistrate, in *all* states, to establish some national religion, and to exclude, *generally*, if not in *all* cases, such persons from civil offices, as refuse to conform to the publick establish’d worship. And we constantly find that form of publick worship establish’d in every state, in which vastly the *majority* of the people agree, as absolutely necessary to preserve the publick peace.

It is very weak and idle in dissenters to ask—
 “ In what other state or country are the *same* incapacitating laws enacted, as are in this nation?” It may as well be ask’d—“ In what other state is a *toleration* granted to dissenters.” If the practice of other nations concludes any thing, it must conclude as *strongly* against a toleration, as against such incapacitating acts.

The truth is : In no other nation or state are the liberties of the subject, and the power or prerogative of the crown, so plainly and fully explain’d

plain'd and limited by the laws, as they are in this nation ; which is the reason, that no such incapacitating laws are enacted in those countries.

In almost all other civiliz'd states, not only in *Europe*, but throughout the world, governors are left at liberty to bestow offices on such persons, as they think proper. And it is notorious, that in all those countries civil offices are *constantly* given to persons, who conform to the establish'd worship ; unless in some very *few* instances, and those *such* as the publick utility requires, and makes prudent or necessary.

If this be *fact*, as I defy the dissenters or their advocates to prove the contrary, this shews the necessity, in the opinion of all civiliz'd states, of not trusting much power in the hands of persons ill affected to the establish'd religion, in order to preserve the peace and welfare of the community.

Notwithstanding this constant and universal practice of all other states — I do agree, that it is very far from being an *absolute* and *unerring* guide or direction to us, what ought to be done in this nation, in order to preserve the publick peace, from what is practis'd in other countries.

But in a *case*, in which all civiliz'd nations agree, as they do in this of worship, and limiting civil offices, *generally* if not *always*, to such persons as conform to the establish'd worship ; it must be for some very good cause, it must be absolutely necessary to promote and secure some end ; and this can be no *other*, than to prevent the perpetual jarrings, and contentions, that would, necessarily, in the nature of things, arise among the different sects and parties in religion, in every nation, if the *preference* were not given to some *one* religion, before all others.

And, as there never was any sect or party in religion, but complain'd of this preference, when their own religion was not the establish'd religion; so I defy the dissenters, or their advocates, to give *one* instance, of any one party or sect in religion, that made this complaint, who did not find it absolutely necessary to give the *same* preference to their *own* religion, wherever they prevail'd to have it become the national religion.

It is therefore nothing less, than the most barefac'd insult offer'd to all common sense, and to constant uninterrupted experience in all ages and nations, but in none more remarkably so than in our *own*, to hear the dissenters, or their advocates, declaiming—" what a sure foundation for peace, " and unanimity, and all the blessings of concord " and harmony, it would be, if all religions in " this nation were put upon a level and an equal " foot."

And that man, who is a dissenter, cannot make himself more ridiculous, or deserve more to be hiss'd and laugh'd out of all sober company, that utters such professions as these—" That he has no " zeal for propagating his own opinions in religi- " on, nor any concern for advancing his own se- " cular interests—that he desires no share in the " revenues and privileges, which the Church of " *England* enjoys—that he is not at all uneasy " at being forc'd to contribute to the maintenance " of the clergy of that Church—that, if he had " *sufficient* power, he would not endeavour to put " himself and his religion upon a more advantagi- " ous foot—and, that he, *good man!* only desires " the abolition of these incapacitating acts, as it " would be a *sure* foundation for peace, and una- " nimity, and all the blessings of concord and har- " mony."

Is not this to proclaim himself a *fool*, or a *hypocrite*? A *fool*, to think that the bare professions of *interested* parties ought to have any credit given to them, especially when he cannot be ignorant himself, or suppose the Church of *England* to be ignorant, of the temper and conduct of the dissenters towards her, since their first separation from the Church. Or else a *hypocrite*, to pretend a necessity of separating from the Church of *England*, and a zeal for greater purity in the worship of God; and, at the same time, to declare, that he has no zeal or concern for this pretended purity of worship becoming the establish'd national worship.

All I shall add more upon this head, is——That if the *insults* or *hypocrisy* of these men, in direct contradiction to universal experience of the common workings of human nature, and of the passions and desires of mankind; in direct contradiction to what every man, who will speak the truth in sincerity, finds within himself to be his inclination and desire; and in direct contradiction to what every serious person must desire, who is sincere in his religion——if the Church of *England*, or the members of it, will suffer themselves, either to be terrified by the *insults* of these men, or to be deceiv'd by their *hypocrisy*, against the plainest evidence——they deserve to be deceiv'd, and to feel the fatal effects of putting power and trust into the hands of dissenters, when it is too late to oppose it.

Another argument to prove——that dissenters desire, and would endeavour, to destroy the establishment of the Church of *England*, if *sufficient* power were put into their hands——may be drawn from their conduct, and temper, and principles in former reigns, when they have acquir'd this power.

The same ingenious writer, whom I quoted above, has so fully and justly explain'd and describ'd the conduct and temper of the dissenters, since their first separation from the Church down to the present time, that the reader must be greatly pleased to have it in his own words.

He begins with observing——“ That tho' nothing was retain'd by queen *Elizabeth* in the Church, nor any ceremonies practis'd, that were really unlawful or sinful, or out of any superstitious regard to them; but purely out of a charitable desire to keep as many as possible of the middle or lower sort of people in the communion of the Church, who would have been probably so much shocked and offended, had all the forms of publick worship at once been entirely chang'd, that they would have gone over to the Church of *Rome*.”---And tho' *Sanders*, a popish writer, declared---“ That she contributed very much to the firmness and establishment of her heresy, by not leaving the affair of the *reformation* to the humourfome management of the new clergy, by whose gospel-liberty it had long since gone off into smoke, unless it had by this human policy been kept in bounds and supported”---Notwithstanding all this, What was the temper and behaviour of the dissenters in those days? of those *meek lambs*, who, like their successors, desir'd nothing but---“ that a sure foundation should be laid for peace, and unanimity, and all the blessings of concord and harmony?”

They bitterly exclaim'd against the pious and prudent measures of the *queen*, even at a time, when they had hardly made their escape out of the jaws of the greatest cruelties and barbarities, and tho'

tho' the *Papists* themselves were forc'd to applaud the wise conduct of the *queen*.

“ The *puritans* (says our author) grew more
 “ attach'd to their principles, and more violent in
 “ their conduct. They openly declar'd against
 “ all impositions in religion, tho' of things indis-
 “ ferent in their own nature, and enjoined by the
 “ highest authority in Church and State. They
 “ resolv'd not to be quiet, unless the publick
 “ establishment was altered, and their own fa-
 “ vourite platform of Church-government and
 “ discipline was settled in its room. They made
 “ no scruple to affirm publicly in formal admoni-
 “ tions to the *Parliament*, that this ought to be
 “ done; and, when they found that applications of
 “ this kind would not gain their point with the
 “ *queen*, who was not inclin'd to favour them,
 “ they resolv'd to proceed in other methods. They
 “ fell into all the popular ways they could con-
 “ trive, to recommend their own scheme of worship
 “ and discipline, and make the liturgy and go-
 “ vernment of the Church establish'd, odious in
 “ the nation; particularly, they treated the bi-
 “ shops and clergy with grossly indecent and oppro-
 “ brious language. In the year 1566, they actu-
 “ ally separated from the Church; they soon after
 “ put their own discipline into practice, in those
 “ parts of the kingdom where their influence was
 “ the greatest, and in some of their writings gave
 “ out open menaces against the civil government
 “ itself, if it would not comply, and establish
 “ their scheme. These factious proceedings were
 “ the true reasons, as that wise and good states-
 “ man Sir *Francis Walsingham* observes, why
 “ *queen Elizabeth* altered her conduct towards
 “ them, and used greater severity than she had
 “ done before. She saw, that neither her legal
 “ pre-

“ prerogative, nor the peace of the kingdom
 “ could be preserv’d, unless their turbulent spirit
 “ was restrained ; and she was therefore obliged to
 “ practise some rigours, which at first were no
 “ part of her intention.”

Tho’ I am far from justifying these rigours and severities exercis’d by *queen Elizabeth* against the *nonconformists* in her reign, much less from thinking that any argument can be drawn from thence for the exercise of the *same* in these days---yet, what provocation did this *stubborn generation* give that excellent *princess* to practise these rigours? or, who can pretend absolutely to determine——Whether, if *greater* rigours and severities had not been practis’d, than perhaps were *strictly* justifiable, the nation had not fallen back again into *Popery*; or fallen a sacrifice to the *Popish* party, by their own intestine divisions, ripened up into a civil war?

Our author—“ after condemning the wrong
 “ measures in those two weak and unfortunate
 “ reigns of king *James* the first, and king *Charles*
 “ the first, which gave occasion and opportunity
 “ to the *puritans* to become popular, and increase
 “ to that degree, as in the end to abolish the pre-
 “ lacy, worship, and discipline of the Church of
 “ *England*, and to exalt their own presbyterian
 “ scheme in their room”——with great impartiality gives us the following description of their conduct and behaviour.

“ How did they use their power, when they
 “ had it? did they suffer the clergy to retain their
 “ benefices and preferments? or did they allow
 “ any congregations, or private persons, a liberty
 “ to worship God according to the service of the
 “ Church of *England*? On the contrary, besides the
 “ attempt they made, by methods of iniquity, to blast
 “ the reputation of many of the clergy, they re-
 “ quir’d

“ requir’d them *all* to take that *solemn league and*
 “ *covenant*, with which they knew that the faith-
 “ ful sons of the Church of *England* could not
 “ comply; and those, who refus’d it, they not
 “ only threw out of all their *preferments*, but ge-
 “ nerally sequester’d their *temporal estates*, if they
 “ had any such; and, on every the least pretence,
 “ found means, by the civil or military power,
 “ to harass and oppress them. In like manner, the
 “ gentry, and others of the laity, besides the
 “ great hardships many of them suffer’d in their
 “ *temporal* concerns, were *all* prohibited to use, or
 “ cause to be used, even in *private*, the liturgy of
 “ the Church of *England*. In case they did so,
 “ they forfeited for the first offence, five pounds;
 “ for the second, ten pounds; and for the third,
 “ were to suffer a year’s imprisonment. Such ri-
 “ gours of different kinds were continued, till the
 “ body of the nation, unable to bear them any
 “ longer, most gladly restor’d king *Charles* the
 “ second, with whom the Church of *England* re-
 “ cover’d her rights.”

It ought to be acknowledged here——That no
 argument ought or can be drawn, from these bar-
 barities practis’d by dissenters against churchmen,
 that the *like* cruelties may be justly exercis’d against
 them. Nor ought it to be absolutely concluded
 from hence, that the dissenters, in these days, would
 exercise the *same* cruelties, if their own religion
 was the establish’d religion.

But it is certainly a very strong argument——
 That we can never be too *much* upon our guard
 against men, or put too *little* trust and power
 into their hands; who, if they do not profess
 the *same* persecuting principles, do profess the *same*
 religious opinions, and are as zealous for the esta-
 blishment of them, as these their predecessors could
 possibly be, who exercis’d those barbarities for the
 pro-

propagation and establishment of *those* religious opinions.

It is likewise a very strong argument — That the professions and declarations of modern *nonconformists* ought not to be relied upon, unless they had *publickly* renounced and condemned these barbarities and cruelties exercis'd by their predecessors; which they have *never* yet done, but rather the contrary, as shall be shewn hereafter.

Our author proceeds to trace out the temper and behaviour of the dissenters, to the time of the accession of the present *Royal Family* to the throne, and gives us several most flagrant instances of their cruel persecuting temper, and the severities and barbarities they exercis'd towards the episcopal clergy, as soon as they prevailed to have their own religion establish'd in *Scotland*.

The whole of his discourse ought to be read by every friend to the Church of *England*, or to the present *Royal Family*; as it is wrote with that temper and moderation, as well as with the greatest clearness and strength of reason and argument.

It is a discourse entitled — *A Plea for the Sacramental Test, as a just security to the Church Establish'd, and very conducive to the welfare of the State.*

And indeed it is a great pity, the author publish'd this discourse, which ought to have been in the hands of *every* friend to the present establishment, in *such* a manner (being beautifully printed in *quarto*) as to make it too *expensive* to be universally read. I could wish, it were reprinted in *octavo*, and at so low a price as 6 *d.* or 12 *d.* that every understanding man might be encourag'd to read it.

And let the *ablest* champion, the dissenters can boast of, stand forth, and give a satisfactory answer

swer to that discourse ; and, I believe, I may promise for great numbers, as well as myself—that we will become *advocates* with him for the repeal of the *Corporation and Test-Acts*.

But to return : In hopes, that what I have here said may prevail with the author to have this discourse of his reprinted at a *low* price—I shall give the reader but a few quotations out of it, to shew the spirit of the dissenters, down to the very time of the accession of the present *Royal Family* to the crown.

Our author, having given us the reasons, how the episcopal government came to be abolish'd in *Scotland*, and the *Presbyterian* to be establish'd in that kingdom, he thus proceeds.

“ And when the gentlemen of this persuasion
 “ had once the power in their hands, they treated
 “ the poor episcopal clergy in the like, and even
 “ a worse manner, than they had before been used
 “ in *England*, when the *Presbyterians* prevailed
 “ there.” Bishop *Burnet* tells us — “ that in the
 “ west of *Scotland* they generally broke in upon
 “ the episcopal clergy with great insolence, and
 “ much cruelty ; they carried ’em about the parishes
 “ in a mock procession ; they tore their gowns, and
 “ drove them from their churches and houses. Nor
 “ did they treat those of them, who had appear’d very
 “ zealously against popery, with any distinction.”

He then goes on to give us an account of their behaviour in *Ireland*, in queen *Anne’s* reign. In which he quotes a passage from the bishop of *Derry* in his second admonition to the dissenters of his diocese — “ Some of your teachers (says the
 “ bishop) seem to be of as persecuting a spirit
 “ as the *Papists*, and have so far influenced the
 “ most zealous of their hearers, that they already
 “ persecute, as far as they have power, those
 “ that dissent from them ; insomuch, that, as I

“ observ’d before, *some, that are heartily desirous*
 “ *to come to Church, dare not, for fear of being un-*
 “ *done by their neighbours.*”

“ And that this account was not aggravated,
 “ but that these oppressions were continu’d, has
 “ appear’d since very plainly, by a representation
 “ of the *House of Lords in Ireland* to queen *Anne*,
 “ of which the substance was as follows. That
 “ the dissenters had opposed and persecuted the
 “ conformists, in those parts where their power pre-
 “ vail’d, had invaded their congregations, and pro-
 “ pagated their schism in places where it had not
 “ the least footing formerly. That they refus’d to
 “ take conforming apprentices, and confined trade
 “ among themselves, exclusive of the conformists.
 “ That, in their illegal assemblies, they had pro-
 “ secuted and censured their people, for being
 “ married according to law. That they had
 “ thrown publick and scandalous reflections upon
 “ the episcopal order, and upon our laws, parti-
 “ cularly the sacramental test; and had misap-
 “ plied the bounty of 1200*l. per annum*, in pro-
 “ pagating their schism, and undermining the
 “ Church; and had executed an illegal jurisdiction
 “ in their presbyteries and synods, &c. We see
 “ here, what a spirit they shew’d, and what use
 “ they made of their power, as far as it would
 “ go.”

Our author very justly observes——“ That they
 “ had less encouragement to do any thing of this
 “ kind in *England*, because the body of the na-
 “ tion was heartily dispos’d to support the Church.
 “ But that, presuming, more perhaps than they had
 “ reason, upon their interest in king *William*, and
 “ hoping that the weight of the court might go
 “ far in their behalf, they nevertheless made some
 publick

“publick steps, which shew’d what their views
“were, even in this kingdom.”

And he instances in “*Sir Humphrey Edwin’s*,
“who was *Lord Mayor* of *London* in 1698, go-
“ing with the ensigns of his magistracy to a dis-
“senting meeting-house.”

And when this was complain’d of, one of their
principal teachers, Mr. *James Pierce*, publish’d a
treatise; which, he tells the world, had given
good satisfaction *universally* to his brethren; where-
in he *childishly*, but most *insolently*, pretends to
vindicate this conduct of *Sir Humphrey Edwin*.
“One would think (says he) the Church looks
“upon these fine things as her property, or sup-
“poses they have been hallowed by some bishop,
“and so were profan’d by being carried into any
“place of worship, not first consecrated by one of
“that order.”

It is impossible to croud more *scorn*, and *inso-*
lence, and *scurrility*, against the Church of *Eng-*
land, in so few words. And yet these are the
men, for this man died but a few years ago, and
his name, and memory, and writings are in high
esteem and veneration among the dissenters—these
are the men, who tell you, “they are only for
“laying a sure foundation for peace and unanimi-
“ty, and all the blessings of concord and har-
“mony.” *Reasonableness of repealing the Corpora-*
tion and Test Acts, page 5.

How cruel is it in the Church of *England*, not
to believe them? not to rest satisfied—“That
“they mean no *alterations* in the Church, by the
“repeal of these Acts, but only to be restor’d to
“some few *natural rights*, of which they are un-
“justly deprived, and to carry these *fine things*,
“the ensigns of magistracy, to their meeting-
“houses,

“ houses, in *all* the Corporations in the kingdom.”

I come now, in the third and last place, to shew — That it is plain and undeniable, from the present temper and principles of the dissenters, that they would, if *sufficient* trust and power were put into their hands, not only desire, but endeavour, the subversion of the present establishment of the Church of *England*.

I believe every sensible, impartial man will allow — that there is not the least reason to doubt, from the temper, the conduct, and the principles of the dissenters, down from the time of the *reformation*, to the establishment of their religion in *Scotland*, that the dissenters had no other view, nor would be content with any thing *less*, than the *total* abolition of episcopacy in this nation, if sufficient power had been put into their hands.

Nay, I verily believe, that the dissenters *themselves* will not have the assurance to deny this. What reason then have we to believe or to be satisfied, that the present body of dissenters would not attempt the *same* thing, if they were entrusted with *sufficient* power?

This can only appear from hence — Either, that the present body of dissenters have *publicly* disavow'd and condemn'd the doctrines and writings of their predecessors. Or else, that they have *publicly* maintain'd and asserted such principles and doctrines as are utterly incompatible with the principles and doctrines of their predecessors.

This is what, I take it for granted, they *themselves* would agree to, as sure and real marks of their affection to the Church of *England*, and their having no view or intention to subvert her establishment. For it ought to be consider'd, that if they have not done *both* these, it is the same as if they had
done

done *neither*. Or, that if they have *publickly* maintain'd and asserted principles and doctrines utterly incompatible with the principles and doctrines of their predecessors; nevertheless, if it be true, that they do, at this time, celebrate the memories of their predecessors; they do not deserve to be believ'd, that they have forsaken their doctrines and principles, or that they do, in *sincerity*, assert and maintain the contrary doctrines and principles.

Nor is it sufficient to answer to this—— That they have asserted the contrary doctrines and principles; especially if it be true—— that if they do, at this time, celebrate the memories of some of the most noted of their predecessors, by writing their lives, and recommending their works to the present generation of dissenters.

To shew that they have done this, hear the words of the author of *A Plea for the Sacramental Test*.

“ Dr. Calamy has done this remarkably in his
 “ *abridgment of the life of Mr. Baxter*, and in
 “ others of his works, in which he extols not only
 “ Mr. Baxter, but many more of the *nonconfor-*
 “ *mists*, as so venerable for their piety and other
 “ good qualities, that they were men of whom the
 “ world was not worthy. The like encomiums
 “ have been made upon Dr. Manton, who preach-
 “ ed at Cromwell's inauguration, and recommended
 “ his *highness* to the blessing of God; upon Dr.
 “ Owen, who was a particular favourite of the
 “ *protector's*, and upon divers other worthies of
 “ that age. And lately Mr. Neale, has publish'd
 “ a work to vindicate and adorn the characters of
 “ those more ancient *Puritans*, who made the first
 “ disturbances in the Church, in the reign of queen
 “ Elizabeth, and of those, who continu'd them down
 “ from that time to the great Rebellion.”

These

These writers might do well in commending the piety of the persons, whose lives they publish; but surely they ought to have *condemn'd* their bitter invectives, and severe hardships practis'd by them against the Church of *England*. For, by making no *exception* to any practices of this kind, it must and ought to be concluded—that in their hearts they *approve* of them.

Let us examine now, whether it be true—That they have even asserted and maintain'd such principles and doctrines as are utterly incompatible with the principles and doctrines of their predecessors.

What the author of *A Plea for the Sacramental Test* has produc'd from one of their greatest champions, Mr. *James Pierce*, is an undeniable proof, that they have not forsaken the tenets of their predecessors.

“ The generality of the *English Presbyterians*,
 “ (says Mr. *Pierce*, in a treatise that he tells us had
 “ given good satisfaction *universally* to his bre-
 “ thren) as far as I can judge, don't differ much
 “ from the *Presbyterians*, who took the *covenant*
 “ in 1643, wishing the present very corrupt form
 “ of prelacy were abolished, and the true ancient
 “ episcopacy were restor'd.” And unless this, and
 some other things were done, he declares against
 any union or accommodation with the Church of
England. “ Let all our brethren, says he, through
 “ the whole world be judges, whether we have
 “ not good reason utterly to forsake the tenets of
 “ these men, and keep at the *greatest distance* from
 “ their communion.” After which he adds: “ We
 “ have all along desir'd peace, and will still most
 “ chearfully embrace it, as soon as the *unrighte-*
 “ *ous conditions*, which now obstruct it, are re-
 “ mov'd. But if no alteration can be made in the
 “ terms,

“ terms, *there is an end of all hope of peace and concord.*”

“ Now, (as the author of the *Plea* adds) what can with reason be concluded from all these proceedings, but that the dissenters of the present age have much the *same* principles and dispositions towards the Church, with those their so greatly admir'd predecessors, and would, in a proper conjuncture of affairs, be likely to take the *same* measures against her. The only material and avowed change of principles, that I can find to have been among them, seems to be with regard to the *toleration* of those, whom they think to be erroneous in religion. In that point, indeed, they seem no longer to adhere to the rigid notions of the ancient sectaries. They have made some publick and full declarations for general liberty of judgment and profession, for mutual forbearance and Christian benevolence. But are these declarations to be understood, as importing *security* to the Church of *England* in her *present state*, supposing that they had power sufficient to *alter* it? Not at all: Mr. *Pierce*, in his answer to *Dean Sherlock*, no longer ago than the year 1718, very frankly acquaints us, that if we think so, we are much mistaken. The *Dean*, says he, asks—*Have any of the dissenters declar'd that they are for maintaining the Church as by law establish'd?* To which he answers: *It would be very strange, if they should. Can they dislike so many things, as they do, in the Church, and yet be against altering them?* From whence it is plain, that before this gentleman, and those of his mind, would be content that our establishment should be *maintain'd*, there are *many things* to be altered in it.”

“ And,

“ And, much to the same purpose, we have
 “ yet more *lately* the sentiments of another writer
 “ on the same side; who, after he has observed,
 “ in *decent expressions*——that the Church of *Eng-*
 “ *land* hath already devoured many a rich morsel,
 “ that surely, it must be an unconscionable sto-
 “ mach, that can be contented with nothing less
 “ than the whole.”——He proceeds to assure us—
 “ That the dissenters are absolutely content, till
 “ her arms are open’d a little wider, to leave her
 “ in possession of every emolument belonging to
 “ her as mother-church?” But *how much wider*
 must her arms be open’d in order to receive them?
 The measure of latitude necessary to this end, is
 not quite proper to be mention’d at present. The
 only farther explanation he gives of this point, is —
 “ That the body of dissenters are friends to an esta-
 “ blishment, provided our foundations were a
 “ little larger, and some proper alterations were
 “ made.”

“ From what has been said, and the passages
 “ cited from dissenting writers of *late*, as well as
 “ of *former* times; we may justly conclude, that
 “ they are not dispos’d to suffer the establishment
 “ of our Church *to continue as it is*; but would,
 “ if they had power, forthwith make a *number of*
 “ *such alterations as they think proper*. And until
 “ this be done, they will never be quiet, but will
 “ always be endeavouring to bring it to pass.”

“ We might indeed have had some reason to
 “ conclude this, if we only consider’d the general
 “ inclinations of mankind, to promote and propa-
 “ gate their own opinions in religion, and to ob-
 “ tain as great a share of secular advantages, as
 “ they can, along with them. But when to this
 “ ground of judgment is added the *experience* we
 “ have had, in such a long course of years, of
 “ the

“ the spirit and temper of the dissenters towards
 “ the Church ; and moreover, the *signs* they give,
 “ even now, of the *continuance of the same dispo-*
 “ *sitions*, by celebrating the memories of their
 “ predecessors in the separation, and avowing
 “ most of their tenets ; we have, I think, in these
 “ circumstances, as much evidence, as can well
 “ be expected in a matter of this nature, and such
 “ as may justify our acting, as there may be occa-
 “ sion, upon it.”

This then is the first thing I propos'd to shew
 — That the body of dissenters, if *sufficient* power were
 put into their hands, would desire and endeavour
 the subversion of the present establishment of the
 Church of *England*.

The next thing to be prov'd, is — That the repeal
 of the *Corporation* and *Test Acts* would actually in-
 vest the dissenters with a *sufficient* power to subvert
 the present establishment of the Church of *Eng-*
land.

It has been alledg'd by the advocates for the
 dissenters — in order to shew, that the repeal of the
Corporation and *Test Acts* would not invest the dis-
 senters with power *sufficient* to subvert the esta-
 blish'd Church of *England*, or so much as to en-
 courage or enable them to attempt it — “ That
 “ in order to their attempting to possess themselves
 “ of supreme power, there must be a thorough uni-
 “ on or coalition of all their several parts into one
 “ body ; or else, that there must be some one or
 “ two parts of them, whose attempt the rest shall
 “ resolve not only to acquiesce in, but to support
 “ and assist ; which is impossible to conceive, be-
 “ cause they do as truly differ from one another,
 “ as they do from the Church.”

In answer to this, I would beg leave to ask —
 Was not *this* the case in this nation, when the dis-

senters did *actually* possess themselves of sovereign power? were there not, at that time, as *many* different parts of them, as there can be now? and yet did they not *all* agree to destroy the establish'd Church, without entering into any such schemes, as these writers suppose necessary now, so much as to make them attempt the subversion of the Church?

How much more justly and reasonably does the author of the *Plea* account by what steps the dissenters might now attain to *sufficient* power, or even sovereign power, and did *actually* acquire that power in the reign of king *Charles* the first?

“ Tho’ (says he) they differ among themselves
 “ in many respects, and might be ill enough inclin’d to each other, in case they were *competitors* for any *advantage*; yet, while there is nothing of that sort to set them at variance, they will probably *agree* in being *enemies* to the establishment of the Church, and in endeavouring to weaken and subvert it; because in its subversion, they may all hope to find their several advantages, in one way or another. If they cannot all expect to gain *such establishment* for themselves, as the *Church* has at present; yet they may all hope to have some allowances from the state for their several teachers, according to a scheme as is said to be found by some of their friends. Or if this point should prove too hard to be gain’d, they may at least hope to be *reliev’d from that unjust burthen*, as the *quakers* and many others account it, of *paying to an establish’d ministry*; and may reasonably expect to encrease very much their several sects, when there shall not be a regular body to oppose them. These, and other motives of the like nature, did, in *fact*, engage the different sectaries
 “ in

“ in 1641, to act in close concert and union together for demolishing the Church of *England*.
 “ Not only the *Presbyterians*, who hoped to be establish’d in the room of the *Church*, but the
 “ *Independants*, and the *Anabaptists*, the *Enthusiasts* who were for the *fifth Monarchy*, and others
 “ of that turn, who knew not what they were for, yet all heartily agreed——“ in declaring,
 “ before God, with up-lifted hands, that they would
 “ extirpate the episcopal government by archbishops,
 “ bishops, deans and chapters, and all the officers dependent upon them; —— which accordingly, by
 “ their joint assistance, was brought to pass.”

“ Then indeed, after a little time, (adds our author) these sects began to quarrel among themselves; and the *Presbyterians*, who came nearest to obtain an establishment, most bitterly reproach’d the *Independants*, the *Anabaptists*, and other sectaries, with their schism, their ill principles, and their hypocrisy, as what produced insupportable disorders.”

And he gives us several instances of this from their own writings, and then adds——“ After so much discord, one would have hardly thought it possible for them to have *united* any more; but, upon the *restoration*, all these differences were soon forgotten, and they acted amicably in concert again, to carry on their work of opposing the Church of *England*. They do so at present, and while they have such an adversary before them, it is probable they always will.”

But, more particularly and fully to shew, what great power the *repeal* of these acts would put into the hands of the dissenters, our author very minutely, and with great truth and justice points out to us——what would be the conduct of the dissenters, and by what steps they would possess them-

felves of all or most of the corporate and other burroughs throughout the kingdom.

“ These their united efforts (says he) against the
 “ Church, will be likely to have the greater suc-
 “ cess, in regard that the dissenters may gain
 “ such an interest in the corporate and other
 “ burroughs, which send members to *Parliament*, as
 “ may give them a weight in the legislature; much
 “ more than in strict porportion to their numbers
 “ and their wealth. Both these, according to their
 “ own accounts, are very considerable. But what-
 “ ever their strength be, it is undoubtedly a cir-
 “ cumstance of great advantage, towards the ex-
 “ erting of it with effect; especially, if we confi-
 “ der what one of their advocates has observ’d,
 “ and I believe with truth” — *That the dissenters*
being for the most part engag’d in the trade of the
kingdom, both as merchants, and manufacturers,
must necessarily create a great dependence upon them.

This *unguarded* confession, and declaration from an adversary, and which is of very great weight, cannot surely fail to alarm all true friends of the establish’d Church.

“ Let us only suppose (says our author) a good
 “ number of them in the *House of Commons*, and
 “ that they prove active, constantly attendant, well
 “ united, able speakers, and not uneasy in their
 “ private fortunes; what will they not think
 “ they have a right to claim? what may they not
 “ combine to gain? what may they not succeed
 “ in? Some persons, who have been for the
 “ abolition of the *Test*, have *professed* to think,
 “ that it could have no other effect, than to
 “ occasion the admission of dissenters into of-
 “ fices of the *inferior* kind. I suppose they meant
 “ such offices, as a writer for the dissenters spe-
 “ cifies, in saying, that” — *They are as willing*
and able as any, to serve in the commissions of taxes,
peace,

peace, and lieutenancy, in the bench of aldermen and assistants.

“ But this same writer is by no means contented
 “ with posts of this kind. He puts in his claim
 “ to a share of all, even the highest in the king-
 “ dom; for he adds”——*that they are as willing*
to serve in the judicature, and offices of state, or in
commands at sea and land. “ And soon after
 “ he intimates”——*that it would not be to the dis-*
honour of the government, to have a dissenting gene-
ral, or a dissenting statesman. “ As to which, I
 “ doubt not, but most of his friends are of his
 “ opinion. And will it be impossible they
 “ should gain such posts? have we not had
 “ examples in our history, of men of interest
 “ in *Parliament*, who have rais’d themselves
 “ into offices of that kind, without any real fa-
 “ vour from the crown? was not this the case
 “ of Mr. *St. John*, of Lord *Say*, and of others
 “ in the reign of *Charles* the first? was it not the
 “ case of the earl of *Shaftsbury*, in the reign of
 “ *Charles* the second? and whenever the dissenters
 “ should obtain any of the *chief posts*, would not
 “ the interest and strength of their party be pro-
 “ portionably encreas’d? would they not be pre-
 “ ferr’d to all the under-places of trust, profit, or
 “ influence, in the disposal of their principals?
 “ would they not act with so much more digni-
 “ ty and weight? would not the members, and
 “ especially the ministers, of the establish’d Church,
 “ be proportionably discountenanc’d and discour-
 “ rag’d? and must not these circumstances under-
 “ mine and cut away the ground of our Church-
 “ establishment?”

“ It has been represented as *absurd*, to apprehend
 “ that the establishment of the Church of *England*
 “ should ever come to be subverted by the dissenters;
 “ because

“ because this must suppose them to gain the whole
 “ legislature, the *king*, and the *lords*, as well as the
 “ *Commons*. But the reader will hardly fail to re-
 “ flect, that the very *same* thing, which is now
 “ talked of as so *impracticable*, has been *actually*
 “ done in this kingdom, not a hundred years ago ;
 “ and done by the power of those dissenters, who,
 “ a short time before, had as *little* appearance
 “ of being able to prevail upon the *whole* legisla-
 “ ture, as their successors have at present. The
 “ circumstances, now in favour of the latter, are
 “ not indeed quite the *same* as they were then, but
 “ they are of *great* weight ; and I believe it will
 “ be allow’d, that the *House of Commons*, at pre-
 “ sent, is not of less moment in the ballance of
 “ the constitution, than it was at that time ; nor
 “ are critical conjunctures in our affairs less likely
 “ to happen, when there is a *Pretender* to the
 “ throne of these kingdoms, and when *France* is
 “ much more formidable to us, than it was at that
 “ time. Let any man of judgment but think on
 “ the posture our affairs may possibly be in, both
 “ at home and abroad, in the course of events for
 “ thirty or forty years to come. Let him suppose,
 “ that upon the repeal of the *Corporation* and *Test*
 “ acts, the dissenters should gain either a *majority*,
 “ or even a *party* of considerable weight in the
 “ *House of Commons* ; and when we consider the
 “ *gentlemen* of *North Britain*, this will not ap-
 “ pear to be very unlikely. Let him suppose,
 “ that the concurrence of this party may be neces-
 “ sary to grant supplies, when they are more than
 “ ordinarily wanted, in times of any publick ha-
 “ zard or distress ; that divers of those members,
 “ who are for the Church of *England*, may be
 “ *unattentive* or *disunited*, while the dissenting par-
 “ ty is *vigilant*, *active*, and *resolute* in pushing any
 “ points

“ points to the disadvantage of the Church. These
 “ were really the circumstances in 1641; they may
 “ possibly, and even not improbably, upon the
 “ repeal of the *Corporation* and *Test Acts*, be the
 “ same again. And, supposing they should be,
 “ will any one say, that the Church establish’d
 “ would be *in no danger*? I will leave this Point,
 “ without farther enlargement, to the impartial
 “ reader; who, I doubt not, must clearly see,
 “ that in such circumstances, the establishment of
 “ the Church would be made to shake to its very
 “ foundations; and, without such extraordinary
 “ aid and support from the *crown*, or the *house of*
 “ *peers*, as perhaps it will be difficult for either of
 “ them to give, must be borne upon, sink, and
 “ at length be overthrown.

It is, indeed, impossible for any man to say or
 determine — how far the dissenters might, by these
 means, either entirely *change* the civil establishment;
 or *compel* the crown to consent to the establishment
 of their own religion. But supposing they never
 could be able to attain this; is it not evident, even
 to a demonstration, that the repealing of these laws
 would put the *magistracy* of all, or most of the
 corporations and towns in *England* into their hands;
 and that innumerable troubles must arise from
 hence, if not occasion an actual civil war or rebel-
 lion?

The dissenters, or their advocates, may pretend
 to ridicule this, and to represent it as a *vast* and
almost unconceivable work, that they should ever
 acquire such a degree of power. But I would ask
 them — What *greater* probability was there of their
 predecessors being ever able to subvert the whole
 constitution in the reign of *Charles* the first?

If there were *circumstances*, that concurr’d in
 those days to bring that *vast* and *entirely unconcei-*
vable

able work to pass, which cannot be *now*; and, which is very true, there are circumstances *now*, which were not *then*, and which, as *much* if not *more*, contribute and concur to bring the *same* to pass in these days.

For, if the *Gentlemen of North-Britain*, which cannot be denied to be a very *strong* circumstance — If all that sect or party, who stile themselves *Free-Thinkers* — If both these *unite* themselves to the dissenters, they will make up a body, much *more* formidable to the Church of *England*, than the whole body of dissenters was in the reign of *Charles* the first: especially, if we consider how greatly this *humour* of *free-thinking*, and very often, under the *cover* of this, of *infidelity*, prevails and spreads itself at this time in this nation.

And it is too plain and evident — that it is from the strength of this party *uniting* themselves to dissenters, that they promise themselves *success*, or at least are *encourag'd* to apply to *parliament* for a repeal of these laws.

I have now gone through every point I propos'd to treat of; and have, I trust, sufficiently satisfied every sensible and impartial man, if not from my *own* reasoning, yet from the reasoning of the author of the *Plea*, of the great *mischief* and *danger* of repealing these incapacitating acts.

To sum up the whole in the words of this *excellent writer*.

“ Now, in these dispositions of the nation, I
 “ think, they, who know mankind, will hardly
 “ avoid foreseeing, that, in case the *Test Act* be re-
 “ peal'd, there must great animosities and contests
 “ ensue. For the dissenters will, in all appearance,
 “ presently apply themselves to gain an interest in
 “ the corporate burroughs, and other towns, to be
 “ chosen into the government of them, to be put
 “ into

“ into the commissions of peace, and lieutenancy,
 “ and all other posts of trust, profit, or influence,
 “ that may be within their reach ; and proba-
 “ bly, by supporting one another in their appli-
 “ cations for these places, or enforcing it by the
 “ joint weight of their *whole* body, when ’tis ne-
 “ cessary, they must often succeed in their pre-
 “ tensions. For we may judge what their manner
 “ of applying will be, from what has been already
 “ said by one among them, who writes with an
 “ air of importance, and hath thought fit to give
 “ the world the history of their consultations and
 “ proceedings, in order to procure the abolition
 “ of the *Test*. This gentleman, having intimated
 “ that the application of the dissenters in *Ireland*
 “ for the repeal of the *Test Act* there, ought to
 “ have been *enforc’d with the whole weight of the*
 “ *dissenters in England*; and having complain’d
 “ that *that* affair, which had been promis’d by a
 “ very great man, as an *earnest of future favours*
 “ to the dissenters in *England*, had *shamefully* mis-
 “ carried, expresses his resentment in the following
 “ terms—*Are the dissenters to be thus treated in*
 “ *the face of an election ?*”

—*Manifesta fides, Danaümque patescunt insi-*
diæ—

“ The reader will easily understand, who is
 “ here accus’d of breach of faith, and who are
 “ reckon’d insidious enemies to the dissenters. He
 “ will perceive, by the favours said to be pro-
 “ mis’d in the *plural number*, the bare repeal
 “ of *these Acts in question* will hardly content them;
 “ and he will observe, what their manner of ap-
 “ plication will be, to gain any advantages they
 “ think themselves intitled to, whenever their assis-
 “ tance is wanted by the crown, and that they will
 “ expect to be proportionably considered.”

“ And will dispositions or attempts of this kind,
 “ on the part of the dissenters, to enlarge their
 “ interest and power, raise no concern at all in
 “ the members of the Church of *England*? will
 “ these be in no degree solicitous to maintain their
 “ ground? will the members of the burroughs
 “ and other corporations be contented, that *dissen-*
 “ *ting ministers* at *London* should *direct* them in the
 “ choice of the members of their bodies, and
 “ their representatives in *Parliament*? will the
 “ ancient gentry, whose families have always had
 “ a natural interest in the burroughs, be easy in
 “ seeing it undermin’d, and in a way of being
 “ reduc’d to little or nothing? will they negligent-
 “ ly suffer a new set of people, and the greatest
 “ part of them of the *lowest* rank, to come in
 “ upon them, and cross their pretensions to every
 “ post of trust and profit? will they be easy in
 “ seeing that Church, which their *ancestors* have
 “ endow’d and protected, which all the *foreign*
 “ *Churches* so greatly respect, and which the *ar-*
 “ *guments* of the dissenters have been unable to
 “ hurt, borne down by the growth of their secu-
 “ lar interest? will they not endeavour to form
 “ opposite interests, and take proper methods to
 “ prevent these inroads? and must not these mea-
 “ sures produce animosities, violent enmities, and
 “ their dire effects? may they not give opportu-
 “ nities, which persons disaffected to the govern-
 “ ment will improve to its disadvantage? may not
 “ foreign enemies find their account in them? I
 “ think, any one, who knows mankind, and the
 “ present state of our parties and dispositions in
 “ *England*, must see that these consequences would
 “ be likely to follow upon a repeal of the *Test Act*.
 “ Clouds, much *less* than these appear to be in pro-
 “ spect, have sometimes bred storms, which have
 “ torn up governments by the roots.”

Before

Before I put an end to this discourse, I think it necessary to declare my being of a different opinion with our author in one point of very great consequence—the *repeal* of the *present Test*, and substituting some *other* in the stead of it.

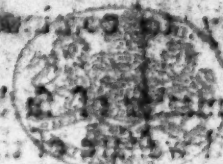
In this I cannot agree with him, or be of opinion——“ That any *other* method can be found “ out, equally effectual to secure the establishment “ of the Church of *England*, from the attempts “ of those, who are ill-dispos’d to it”—whether they be *Papists*, or *Protestant Dissenters*.

I am fully persuaded, that the dissenters would comply with any *other Test*, and for this reason it is of absolute necessity to continue the *Sacramental Test*.

At least, in a matter of such consequence—in which the peace and welfare of the nation, if not the preserving ourselves from falling a sacrifice to our *Papish* adversaries, is concern’d—as the exclusion of all *violent* dissenters from civil offices; when there is a *Test* already appointed, which we see—tho’ numbers of *moderate* dissenters have comply’d with it, and conform’d to the establish’d Church——has kept out all *violent* dissenters from civil offices—It would not shew, we had that proper mixture of christian prudence, which our *author* thinks is needful to guard the Church of *England* from suffering by their prejudices against her; if we exchange’d this *sure* and *certain Test*, to which no *reasonable* objection can be made, for another, perhaps liable to the *same* or as *great* objections; and which might not, for it is impossible to speak with any *certainty* in this matter, exclude one *violent* dissenter from civil offices; and by that means bring upon us all that train of mischiefs, from which we are now *happily* and *effectually* guarded and preserv’d.

"But I put an end to this discourse, I think it
 necessary to declare my being of a different opin-
 ion with our author in one point of very great
 consequence—the extent of the right of the prop-
 erty of the church in the hands of the
 In this I cannot agree with him, or his of opi-
 nion. I have any other method can be found
 and equally effectual to secure the establishment
 of the Church of England, than the attempt
 of those who are ill-disposed to it, whenever
 they see a chance of procuring it by force."

"I am fully persuaded that the distinction is
 contrary to any other will, and for this reason is
 of a nature necessary to secure the establishment."



"It is in a manner of speaking, in
 which the church and the world of the nation is not the
 protecting colleges from falling a sacrifice to our
 Lord's advantage is concerned. As to the action of
 all other dissenters from civil officers, when there
 is a total separation, which we are to maintain
 from of ancient dissenters have completely with us
 and confined to the established Church. The
 Lord God will not allow that civil officers in
 would not show we have proper interests of
 of civil officers, which our author would not
 in to guard the Church of England from falling
 do their proper duty, but that we are to be
 laws and customs, to which we are to be
 objection can be made, for neither party is
 to the law or as great rights; and which
 might not be is impossible to do with any
 consistency in the matter, either one civil officer
 let from civil officers; and let that means be
 upon us all that train of mischief, from which
 the law and the Church are to be protected and preserved."

